

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
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O 291547Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9440
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 05054

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MOPS, SY, IS
SUBJECT: KHADDAM MOSCOW VISIT RELATED TO LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: MFA DIVISION DIRECTOR CLAIMS FONMIN KHADDAM GOING TO MOSCOW AUGUST 29 TO SHARE INFORMATION ON ALLEGED ISRAELI INTENTION TO EXPLOIT LEBANON SITUATION IN HOPES OF DRAWING SYRIA INTO WAR. IN THIS CONNECTION, KHADDAM IS EVIDENTLY SEEKING SOVIET POLITICAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT. WHILE SYRIAN INFORMATION ON ISRAELI INTENTIONS IS PROBABLY SPECIOUS, SYRIANS APPEAR TO BE TAKING THREAT SERIOUSLY. MFA DIVISION DIRECTOR BELIEVES THAT PUBLIC USG STATEMENT WOULD BE HELPFUL. END SUMMARY.

2. MFA EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR JOUAYJATI PUT KHADDAM'S
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SUDDEN VISIT TO MOSCOW AUGUST 29 SQUARELY IN PERSPECTIVE OF EVENTS IN LEBANON AND CONCERNS ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS. JOUAYJATI CLAIMED THAT FONMIN KHADDAM HAD RECEIVED VERY DISTURBING INDICATIONS THAT GOI SEEKS TO MANEUVER EVENTS IN LEBANON SO THAT ISRAEL AND SYRIA WILL COME INTO DIRECT CONFLICT. ISRAELI MOTIVATION, KHADDAM BELIEVES, IS TO ELIMINATE SYRIAN MILITARY STRENGTH BEFORE IT THREATENS

ISRAEL AND TO UNDERCUT SYRIAN ABILITY TO OPPOSE BILATERAL EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT. JOUAYJATI SAYS KHADDAM HAS GONE TO MOSCOW TO SHARE SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE AND ASSESSMENT AND TO SEEK MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT TO COUNTER ISRAELI THREAT.

3. JOUAYJATI SAID THAT ONE ELEMENT OF EVIDENCE FACTORED INTO SYRIAN THINKING WAS A LETTER FROM AMINE GEMAYEL, WHO CLAIMED THAT ISRAELI AGENTS WERE ADVISING PHALANGE AND AHRAR FORCES ON THE GROUND IN BEIRUT. JOUAYJATI'S IMPLICATION WAS THAT ISRAELIS WOULD MANUFACTURE INCIDENT JUSTIFYING ISRAELI INTERVENTION. HE CONTENDED THAT MILITIAS COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT ACT EXCEPT BY DIRECTION OF THESE ISRAELI ADVISORS. ASSUME THAT ANOTHER PIECE OF SYRIAN EVIDENCE WAS SHMUEL SEGEV'S COMMENTARY IN AUGUST 27 MAARIV WHICH OUTLINED THE PROPOSITION THAT THERE ARE SOME POLITICIANS IN ISRAEL WHO BELIEVE ISRAEL OUGHT TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON TO DEAL SYRIA A DECISIVE BLOW. ISRAELI PRESS AS WHOLE SEEMS TO BE PARTICULARLY STRIDENT RE SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON.

4. MEANWHILE, EDITORIAL IN TISHRIIN AUGUST 28 WAS CLEARLY RELATED TO KHADDAM VISIT AND APPEARED TO BE AN OPEN LETTER TO SOVIETS CLAIMING "IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ANTI-IMPERIALISM FORCES TO RECOGNIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE BATTLE IN THE AREA AND THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE OF RESTORING MILITARY AND POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN THE ARABS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THEIR ENEMIES...IT IS NOT AGAINST THE INTEREST OF PEACE AND DETENTE IF THE BALANCE OF FORCES TILTS IN FAVOR OF SYRIA."

5. JOUAYJATI EMPHASIZED SYRIAN LEADERSHIP CONCERN THAT BLOW-UP IN LEBANON WAS POSSIBLE REGARDLESS OF SYRIAN DESIRE TO AVOID WAR WITH ISRAEL. HE SAID IT WOULD BE TAKEN VERY POSITIVELY BY SARG IF USG WERE TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT SEVERELY WARNING AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT CURRENT TENSE MILITARY SITUATION IN BEIRUT TO IGNITE A LARGER PROPHYLACTIC WAR IN THE REGION.

6. COMMENT: WHILE I DON'T GIVE MUCH WEIGHT TO REPORTED SELF-SERVING STATEMENTS OF AMINE GEMAYEL, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE HEIGHTENED RHETORIC FROM BOTH ISRAEL AND SYRIA TALKING OF WAR AND APPARENT SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE TAKING THIS THREAT. THIS IS PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN A WAR OF NERVES BUT THERE IS ALWAYS DANGER THAT EDGINESS ON BOTH SIDES COULD RESULT IN SOME KIND OF A CONFRONTATION THAT NEITHER SIDE REALLY SEEKS. ACCORDINGLY, DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN MIGHT ADDRESS THIS QUESTION BY DEPLORING ESCALATING RHETORIC IN AREA CONCERN-

ING POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR CONFRONTATION IN LEBANON AND EX-
PRESSING OUR STRONG SUPPORT FOR RECONCILIATION AND UNITY
IN LEBANON WITHOUT RESORT TO FORCE OR OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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